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The Interpretation of the Tempo for Violin Dance Music by J. S. Bach: From the Perspective of Historically-Informed Performances

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Abstract

Tempo, one of the most critical elements contributing to musical texture, gives a composition its life, soul, and power. Given the fact that most music scores before the 18th century do not have clear tempo markings or bear no indication at all, it does not mean that composers did not presuppose an ideal tempo for the performance of their musical works. Instead, the interpretation for the tempo of musical works more or less relied on a commonly accepted convention which was unsaid but applied for music composed prior to the 18th century.

This article investigates the interpretation of the solo violin dance music by Johann Sebastian Bach based upon their tempo markings, meter, style and historic background from the perspective of historically-informed performances. Based upon the analysis of selected performances, the authors conclude that there is no "correct answer" to the question about the tempo for these dance pieces. Musicians today can properly decide the tempo of a piece only after they have revisited similar works from the same era while at the same time consider changes materialized during the transitional passage from the mensural notation to the modern metrical system at the juncture of 17th and 18th centuries. On top of this, musicians should focus on bringing out the authentic style by attending to the true spirit and taste of the time in order that they can present a bona fide performance.

Keywords: tempo, dance music, meter, solo violin works by J. S. Bach, historically-informed performance

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由史學演奏觀點探討巴赫小提琴舞曲作品之速度詮釋

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摘　要

「速度」，在音樂中擔任關鍵角色，賦予音樂生命、靈魂與力量。然而，在十八世紀之前，多數的樂譜對於速度標示並不明確，有些樂譜甚至沒有任何速度標記。這並不意味著作曲家對於作品的演奏沒有速度的要求；相反地，當時的音樂家對於音樂的速度有著約定俗成的詮釋。

本文以巴赫無伴奏小提琴舞曲為例，透過當代史學演奏的角度，藉由速度標示、拍號、風格以及歷史背景，深入探討巴赫的舞曲速度詮釋。綜合整理其分析及討論，可發現舞曲速度並沒有所謂的「標準答案」。今日的音樂家面對此時期的作品時，除了速度本身，還應考量到十七、十八世紀正值定量記譜法與現代記譜法的過渡期，拍號在當時所代表的速度含意為何；除此之外，如何完整呈現當代的音樂風格與精神，以及良好的音樂品味，更是現代音樂家應該思考的要件。

關鍵詞：速度、舞曲、拍號、巴赫無伴奏小提琴作品、復古風格演奏

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1. Introduction

"Time makes melody; therefore, time is the soul of music."
— Leopold Mozart[1]

Time, as an English music term, means tempo. The ambiguity of tempo has always been a perplexing question for all musicians, especially for European music before the 18th century. From the 19th century on, the problem was to be solved by the invention of metronome when composers could specify the speed of their music with mechanical devices which provide specific speed units. Examples include music by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), Richard Wagner (1813-1883), and Arnold Schönberg (1874-1951). For composers before the invention of metronome—Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), and their contemporaries—the tempo of their works was mostly implied and unspecified, and so setting the tempo becomes a major challenge for performing musicians today.[2]

In the 18th century, instrumental music, especially the musical works by Bach, reached its peak. His six solo violin works became a landmark for all violinists, musically and technically.[3] However, about 90 percent of Bach's music does not have tempo markings.[4] This absence of tempo markings prompts performers to consider an important question: Were tempos just left unwritten or were there implied marks? To solve the questions about tempo, Johann Philipp

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1 Leopold Mozart, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (Augsburg: Johann Jacob Lotter, 1756), trans. Editha Knocker as *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 30.

2 Frederick Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 15; David Fallows, "Tempo and expression marks," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed December 6, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27650.

3 Robin Stowell, "Other Solo Repertory," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, ed. Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 194; David D. Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761: And Its Relationship to the Violin and Violin Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 348.

4 Ido Abravaya, *On Bach's Rhythm and Tempo* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2006), 146.

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Kirnberger (1721-1783), a student and admirer of Bach as well as a renown theorist and musician in German music (especially Bach's music), states in his treatise that musicians should learn about tempo from dance music, saying "every dance piece has its definite tempo, determined by the meter and the note values that are employed in it."[5]

With the invention of mensural notation system in the 16th century, meter began to play a critical role for tempo with the related markings of note values, bar line, and meter. The transition from the mensural system to the modern metrical system and the coining of terms for tempo in the 17th century allowed musicians to express the ideal style and character that composers intended to convey. However, most of the musical works before the 18th century did not have clear tempo markings or had no markings at all. Words, which were used to indicate tempo, are ambiguous[6] or wrongly interpreted.[7] Hence, the only signal of tempo that musicians need to consider was the meter and tempo words.[8] Bach's three Partitas from his six solo violin works are used in this article as examples to discuss the complexity of tempo and meter from the perspectives of theorists and musicians of the 18th century.

Several scholars investigate the question about music tempo before the 18th century in book-length studies, most notably Frederick Neumann, David D. Boyden, George Houle, and Ido Abravaya,[9] among others. Neumann's book focuses on the performance practices of the 17th and 18th centuries and contains

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5 Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* (Berlin: Decker und Hartung, 1774, 1776, 1777, 1779), trans. David Beach and Jürgen Thym as *The Art of Strict Musical Composition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 376.

6 David Fallows, "Tempo giusto," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed December 6, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27652.

7 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 15-16.

8 Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 17-19.

9 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*; Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*; George Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800: Performance, Perception, and Notation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Abravaya, *On Bach's Rhythm and Tempo*.

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discussions on tempo, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, phrasing, and ornamentation. Regarding tempo, Neumann explores the history and the use of tempo by contextualizing the concept within the theorists of their contemporaries in the 17th and 18th centuries. Boyden underscores the idiom and history of violin before the 18th century, and the development of the tempo system from the 17th to 18th centuries, providing instrumentalists with a clear tempo guideline. Houle navigates readers through discussions on meter from the 17th century to the 19th century and proposes different treatments of meter in performance based upon quotations and examples from historic treatises. Abravaya discusses the rhythm and tempo of the music of Bach and his contemporaries and presents a new guideline for readers to decide on an appropriate tempo when playing Bach's music.

Among the multitudes of treatises by 18th century theorists and musicians, the argument in this article largely relies on the concepts and thoughts proposed by Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773), Johann Philipp Kirnberger, and Daniel Gottlob Türk (1750-1813).[10] Of these three treatises, Kirnberger's work showcases the most complete discussion on the performance practices of the 18th century with special attention to the music of Bach by illustrating the meaning, style, and characteristics of tempo, meter, and rhythm. Quantz argues that with the application of metronome, there is greater precision, which can in turn accentuate the style and characteristics of dance music. Although Türk's treatise is mainly for keyboard players, it still provides a very clear guideline for general performance practices of the 18th century. In addition to these writings, thoughts of 18th century contemporaries such as Leopold Mozart (1719-1787), Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), Sébastien de Brossard (1655-1730), and Georg Muffat

[10] Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voß, 1752), trans. Edward R. Reilly as *On Playing the Flute* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011); Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*; Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule, oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1789), trans. Raymond H. Haggh as *School of Clavier Playing, or Instructions in Playing the Clavier for Teachers & Students* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

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(1653-1704),[11] among others, are also considered in this article. Interestingly, we can see conflicting views on tempo interpretation from many 18th century theorists and musicians, even though they worked and lived in the same music period and wrote under similar circumstances.

Many articles and books examine the subject of Bach's solo violin works, including books written by Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, Joel Lester, David D. Boyden,[12] and articles by Alexander Silbiger[13] and others. Little and Jenne provide the most comprehensive reference available for Bach's dance music. Whereas Lester focuses on Bach's solo violin works, providing background and analysis, Boyden discusses the contribution of Bach's works and their influence. By organizing and listing the chaconnes from all of Bach's works, including vocal, instrumental, chamber, and orchestral works, Silbiger compares all chaconnes and their varieties.

2. Tempo

The musical terms used to specify the "tempo" or to indicate the changes in speed did not exist at the beginning of the development of European music. In the late Renaissance, with its mensural notation, the unit of tempo is called *tactus*,

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[11] Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*; Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister, das ist gründliche Anzeige aller derjenigen Sachen, die einer wissen, können, und vollkommen inne haben muss, der einer Capelle mit Ehren und Nutzen vorstehen will* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739); Sébastien de Brossard, *Dictionaire de musique, contenant une explication des termes grecs, latins, italiens & françois les plus usitez dans la Musique* (Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1703), trans. James Grassineau as *A Musical Dictionary: Containing a Full Explanation of All the Terms Made Use of in the Historical, Theoretical, and Practical Parts of Music* (London: J. Robson, 1769); Georg Muffat, *Georg Muffat on Performance Practice: The Texts from Florilegium Primum, Florilegium Secundum, and Auserlesene Instrumentalmusik*, ed. and trans. David K. Wilson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[12] Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*; Joel Lester, *Bach's Works for Solo Violin: Style, Structure, Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*.

[13] Alexander Silbiger, "Bach and the Chaconne," *Journal of Musicology* 17, no. 3 (July 1999): 358-385, https://doi.org/10.2307/764098.

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which refers to one beat in the sense of a measure as well as the conductor's beat. The conductor's term contains the hand motion of down and up to each *tactus*.[14] The speed of *tactus* is generally stable and linked to natural rhythms such as the heartbeat, the pulse, or the pace of a leisure walk. Given the fact that it is variously perceived, the speed of a unit of *tactus* approximates 60-75 bpm in today's metronome speed, which is generally marked as a whole note (semibreve) in the duple notation.[15]

The *tactus* indicates a standard tempo. However, musical pieces are not composed on one single tempo. The variations of tempos were achieved in several ways during the 16th century. The first method was the implementation of denomination; secondly, the change of beat could be administered by directors or performers who modified the standard *tactus*;[16] thirdly, and most essential, was the "proportions" method—a system related to the length of note values. Additionally, the tempo can be changed by following a mathematic ratio and proportion signs such as *alla breve*, *tripla*, *sesquialtera*, etc.[17]

By the end of the 16th century, the modern metrical system was invented which gradually replaced the mensural system. The transformation of the tempo marking system introduced new music idiom that required more flexibility than the *tactus* and its proportions at the time. The whole concept of tempo evolved by relating meters to tempo and this meter-tempo relationship prevailed until the end of the 18th century. To designate the speed of a piece of music, accompanying words were used and the proportion was gradually discarded by composers. Eventually, tempo became a new idiom in the 18th century. To adapt the modern metrical system, note values were more flexible and might be assigned any tempo, which further strengthened the connection between music and tempo. Kirnberger points out that note values present not only tempo, but

[14] Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*, 180-183.
[15] Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 19-24.
[16] Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 19.
[17] Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*, 181.

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also imply articulation and performance style.[18] As a result, the tempo of a piece of music is associated to the expression of the feelings and emotions, and the use of tempo words gradually become more prevalent for their efficacy to give clear indications.[19]

It was in the 16th century that composers began to put down tempo markings and it was not until 17th and 18th centuries that the practice became an essential part of musical notation. At first, terminology for written on musical scores were not as clear as they are nowadays; they were usually taken down as "long," "fast," and "slow"—words which are subjective to personal perception. The first manuscript with tempo markings was found in a guitar score called *El Maestro*, written by Spanish composer Luis de Milan (1500-1561) in 1530.[20] Although the markings became a common practice in the 17th and 18th centuries, the interpretation of tempo was still very ambiguous not only because there was no exact standard for every tempo marking but also because of the variable interpretations of tempo in different historic periods.[21] By the 18th century, musicians tried to define tempo with more specificity through theoretical writings. In addition, musicians collaborated with scientists to quantize tempo markings in order to standardize tempo speed. French musical theorist Étienne Loulié (1654-1702) is a prominent forerunner in setting the criteria of tempo and he used the swing of the pendulum as his measure. His contemporaries, Joseph Sauveur (1653-1716) and Michel L'Affilard (1656-1708), further refined, enhanced, and complicated Loulié's pendulum theory.[22] Nevertheless, pendulum was by no means the only measurement; flutist Johann Joachim Quantz set the standard by the rate of heartbeat, which will be further discussed below.

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18 Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 375.

19 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 64-65.

20 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 64.

21 Muffat, *Georg Muffat on Performance Practice*, 66.

22 Rebecca Harris-Warrick, "Interpreting Pendulum Markings for French Baroque Dances," *Historical Performance* 6, no. 1 (1993): 9.

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3. Instrumental Dance Music in the 18th Century

The earliest instrumental dance music can at least be traced back to the 16th century if not earlier. Before instrumental solo music flourished in the 18th century, the function of instrumental music was primarily to accompany singers and dancers or to serve as leisure entertainment.[23] Playing dance music was a lucrative business in France and England as chamber ensemble regularly performed music in the royal courts. For example, *Les Vingt-quartre Violons du Roi*, established by King Louis XIII of France, included 24 string musicians who mainly played dance music. When instrumental solo music began to flourish and reached its peak of popularity in the 18th century, composer became more invested on writing instrumental music with technically demanding and virtuosic passages than writing accompaniment pieces.

About the same time, with dance as a graceful leisure which gained popularity among the cultivated and wealthy circles, dance music was no longer confined to the French and English courts. Instrumental music works increased rapidly with greater diversity of dance pieces. On the one hand, French musicians continued to compose dance music, which were viewed as models for dance music throughout Europe. On the other hand, the rise of instrumental solo pieces from Italy, which were notable because of their mixed style of music, began to sweep across Europe. Prominent musicians, including Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) and Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762) from Italy, Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764) and Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667-1737) from France, as well as Bach and Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) from Germany, are all quite prolific in writing miscellaneous and virtuosic dance music for various instruments. Among them, Bach's music establishes the technical and musical standard for his time. He has the greatest output of instrumental dance music

[23] Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*, 136-137.

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though many of these works have been lost.[24] Famous pieces of Bach's dance music works which have survived include his four *Clavier-Übung* volumes, English and French suites for keyboards, instrumental Partitas for solo violin, flute, and cello, and all his chamber and orchestra music. Scholars generally agree that the Partitas are the prototype of baroque dance music because of their technical and structural excellence.[25]

Bach's creative career was very much influenced by the long period of reconstruction after the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) which ended with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia on October 24, 1648. German courts and cities started duplicating the fine arts and culture from their French and Italian counterparts. Thus, there is no lack of evidence which shows the French and Italian influences on the life and music of Bach. Consequently, most of his dance music works are branded with affinity to the music in the French court:

> French conversation, indispensable at that time to any high-born German, was obligatory between the students; and Sebastian (Bach) with his quick mind may have become familiar with a language which he had no chance to study in his schools. There were French plays he could attend, what was more important, French music he can hear.[26]

Bach's compositions are heavily influenced by four different traditions. The first comes from French compositions in which tempo words are used; important examples include Ouverture, BWV 1067, Suite for Lute, BWV 995 and some of Bach's solo violin works. Secondly, Bach was very much inspired by the Italian composer, Arcangelo Corelli, from whom he learned to write sonatas which have four or more movements with one tempo word applying upon them all. The third was the Italian composer, Antonio Vivaldi, who created the typical three-

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[24] Christoph Wolff, "Bach, Johann Sebastian, 7: Leipzig, 1723-9," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed December 18, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.6002278195.

[25] Little and Jenne, Preface to *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, xi.

[26] Karl Geiringer and Irene Geiringer, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Culmination of an Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 11.

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movements formula. The pieces are usually endowed with "finely nuanced tempo headings."[27] The last but not least influence which left a mark on the writing style is the toccata tradition first created by Girolamo Alessandro Frescobaldi (1583-1643).[28] In his notation practice, tempo markings are only written within the movements, but not at the beginning of the score. The markings are only used to remind musicians about the adjustment in tempo. Bach's six solo violin works contain both the French and Italian Corelli traditions.[29]

4. Interpretation of Tempo in Bach's Solo Violin Dance Music

Bach's solo violin works include three Sonatas (BWV 1001, 1003, 1005) and three Partitas (BWV 1002, 1004, 1006). Partita No. 1 and Partita No. 2 are written in the Italian form, while Partita No. 3 in the French style and there is no ambiguity about it as the composer himself put it down in words for the specifics of these pieces. The three Partitas contain at least nine types of dance music movements, namely: Allemanda, Corrente, Sarabande, Menuet, Giga (Gigue), Bourée (Tempo di Borea), Ciaccona, Loure, and Gavotte en Rondeau. Table 1 below shows the dance types and meters from Bach's three Partitas.

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27 Abravaya, *On Bach's Rhythm and Tempo*, 148.

28 Frescobaldi was an Italian composer and virtuosic keyboardist. He was one of the most important musicians in the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods and gave the modern concept of tempo within the mensural system and the modern metrical system. His important works include keyboard music such as *Fiori musicali*, Toccatas and Partitas, and secular vocal music.

29 Abravaya, *On Bach's Rhythm and Tempo*, 148.

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Table 1. Dance types from Bach's three Partitas.

Dance Type	Meter	Partita(s)
Allemanda	C	Partita No. 1 and Partita No. 2
Corrente	3/4	Partita No. 1 and Partita No. 2
Sarabande	3/4	Partita No. 1 and Partita No. 2
Menuet	3/4	Partita No. 3
Giga	12/8	Partita No. 2
Gigue	6/8	Partita No. 3
Bourée	2	Partita No. 3
Tempo di Borea	₵	Partita No. 1
Ciaccona	3/4	Partita No. 2
Loure	6/4	Partita No. 3
Gavotte en Rondeau	₵	Partita No. 3

(1) Allemanda

At the beginning of the 18th century, Allemanda became the most highly stylized of all Baroque dances, and typically the first dance music in a complete suite that includes Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue.[30] However, by the time of Bach, Allemanda no longer reflected a particular subgenre of dance; instead it evolved into a piece that was purely instrumental and prelude-like introduction for suites.[31]

In Kirnberger's classification of time signatures for Bach's Allemanda, "C" is identified as his middle category of tempo, which indicates a lighter and livelier tempo in comparison to the music marked as *grave*, *largo* with meter C.[32]

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[30] Meredith Ellis Little and Suzanne G. Cusick, "Allemande," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed January 20, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.00613.

[31] Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 33-34.

[32] Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 390-391, 400.

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Johann Peter Gabriel Sperling (1671-1720), an 18th century German theorist and composer, states that C means a slower measure than ₵.[33] Austrian theorist and musician Johann Baptist Samber (1654-1717) also suggests that C signals a slow and grave tempo.[34] A century later, Daniel Gottlob Türk, the German composer and music professor, argues that the large 4/4 (C) is used to indicate a slow tempo with strong and heavy execution.[35]

Quantz's treatise articulates that the *entrée* (prelude) in dance music should be played majestically and that the bow should be detached. According to Quantz's pulse beat theory, the metronome markings of the *entrée* is to be reduced to crochet = 80.[36] In that case, the tempo for Bach's works would be too fast to be played appropriately.[37] Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) states that all dance music leans more toward the faster side than the slower side, except for the Allemande, the Sarabande, and the Gavotte.[38] Johann Mattheson also claims that the character of Allemande is "serious."[39]

Based upon the different theories and interpretations of musicians, there is consensus regarding tempo for Allemanda. However, most 18th century musicians and theorists seem to have reached a tacit understanding on that the styles of Allemanda should be prelude-like, with feelings of majesty and solemnness and performed on medium tempo without being too heavy.

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33 Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 43.

34 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 48.

35 Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, 93.

36 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 292.

37 Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*, 469.

38 Jean-Philippe Rameau, Preface to *Nouvelle suite de pièces de clavecin: avec des remarques sur les différents genres de musique* (Paris, [1726?]; repr., Bressuire, France: Anne Fuzeau Productions, 1988), i.

39 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 80.

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(2) Corrente

There are two Correntes in Bach's Partitas with 3/4 time signatures. Triple meters require faster tempo in the 18th century and theorist like John Holden (1729-1771) comments on the features of triple time, saying:

> Common time is naturally more grave and solemn; triple time, more cheerful and airy. And for this reason, it is generally agreed, that every mood of triple time ought to be performed something quicker, than the correspondent mood of common time.[40]

"Courante" was a widely popular dance in the early 17th century, and it diverged into two sub-types: Italian Corrente and French Courante. In the 18th century, the Italian term "Corrente" was also used to mean virtuosic music for instrumental soloists, especially for violins and keyboards. The tempo is a fast triple-meter with one beat to the measure, and musically it consists of a relatively simple texture with running eight notes and elaborated notes in a slow harmonic rhythm.[41] In contrast, French Courante was played at a slower tempo with ambiguous rhythm direction.[42]

In contrast to French Courante, almost no writings are found which focus on the source of Corrente. Occasional discussion about Corrente can be found in treatises where theorists talk about French Courante. From work on the spectrum of dance tempi by Little and Jenne, we can assume that the tempo of Italian Corrente is faster than French Courante, as shown in Figure 1:

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[40] John Holden, *An Essay Towards a Rational System of Music* (Glasgow: Robert Urie, 1770), 36.

[41] Meredith Ellis Little and Suzanne G. Cusick, "Courante," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed January 26, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06707.

[42] Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 134.

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Figure 1. Relative Tempi of Baroque Dances from Fast to Slow.[43]

Rigaudon,* Passepied, Canarie*
French Gigue, Giga II, Bourée
Loure, Forlane, Gavotte, Giga I
Minuet, Chaconne, Passacaglia, Corrente**
Polonaise
Sarabande, Courante

French Courante is characterized as grave,[44] serious,[45] hopeful,[46] majestic,[47] and earnest,[48] which requires a slow tempo with a 3/2 time signature. In the mensural notation system, meter 3/2 indicates slower, heavier, and more serious timber than that of 3/4.[49] Deducing from the above, we can safely postulate that the Italian Corrente delivers a comparatively fast tempo.

Corrente is an informal dance for entertainment, which highlights a "skipping" quality of the dance and creates a spirit of cheerfulness and gayness.[50] According to Thomas Mace (1612-1703), the Corrente distinguishes itself from other dances in its "sprightfulness, and vigour, lively, brisk, and cheerful."[51] Considering the character, rhythm type, meter and virtuosic technique needed to perform Bach's Corrente, musicians should present the idea of one beat per bar

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43 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 20.

44 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 134; Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Louis de Cahusac, "Courante," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, (Paris, 1754), 4:376, trans. Sonja Boon as "Courante," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2006), accessed January 27, 2021, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.605.

45 Robert Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 18.

46 Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 231.

47 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 290.

48 Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, 394.

49 Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 58-59.

50 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 133.

51 Thomas Mace, *Musick's Monument; Or, a Remembrancer of the Best Practical Musick, Both Divine, and Civil, That Has Ever Been Known, to Have Been in the World* (London: T. Ratcliffe & N. Thompson, 1676), 129.

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to make the music smoother and more dance-like, and the music should be interpreted energetically and lively to show its bouncing sprint with fast tempo.

(3) Sarabande

Sarabande was regarded as a colorful, passionate, and exotic dance when it first appeared in Italy in the early 17th century with guitar and castanet as accompaniment. After the Sarabande spread to France, it became one of the favourite dances of the French court. The sense of nobility in its form granted the Sarabande a tempo that is slower so that it endows an elegant, serious, calm, and charming quality. In her discussion on Sarabande, Patricia Ranum described French Sarabande as possessing noble carriage, contrasting moods, unbalanced phrasing, and passionate emotion.[52]

From the late 17th century onward, Sarabande was written as one of the dance suites for a solo instrument. Bach composed more Sarabande than any other dance genres.[53] His contemporary music theorists and musicians agree that the ideal tempo for Sarabande should be slow or very slow.[54] Consequently Sarabande imparts a grave and solemn ambience[55] that is grand, smoother than Courante,[56] and majestic.[57] Quantz characterizes Sarabande as being "played with a rather more flattering expression."[58]

The time signature of Bach's Sarabande is 3/4. Based upon Kirnberger's meter system, "3/4…can assume all degrees of tempo, from indications of allegro

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52 Patricia Ranum, "Audible Rhetoric and Mute Rhetoric: The 17th-Century French Sarabande," *Early Music* 14, no. 1 (February 1986): 22-40, https://doi.org/10.1093/earlyj/14.1.22.

53 Richard Hudson and Meredith Ellis Little, "Sarabande," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed November 19, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.24574.

54 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 92-95.

55 Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 230.

56 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 291.

57 Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, 396.

58 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 290.

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to that of adagio. It is gentle and noble, particularly when containing mostly quarter notes."[59] Quantz gives the metronome marking for Sarabande, and by using his heartbeat system, he proposes that the Sarabande tempo is about 80 quarter notes per minute. However, 80 quarter notes per minute tempo is not the speed that is agreed upon by dancers or even musicians. Apparently, it is too slow for dancers but too fast for Bach's music.[60] Thus, there are other musicians, such as Wendy Hilton, who suggests a slower tempo of about 69 quarter notes per minute.[61]

Granted that different musicians and theorists have different views on the tempo of Sarabande, we can generally agree that the characteristics and meter for the tempo of Bach's Sarabande is relatively slow and moderate with rich expressions.

(4) Menuet

Menuet is the most famous among all Baroque French dances and is the only Baroque dance type that survived into the Classical period after being incorporated as a movement in the classical symphony. As a dance that originated in the French court during the 1660s, the Menuet penetrated all levels of society and was performed in various styles.

Musicians and theorists active in the first half of the 18th century disagreed on the Menuet tempo. Sebastien de Brossard remarks that Menuet is a very gay dance, that it should be played "fort gay" (very gay) and "fort vîte" (very fast).[62] Other theorists such as Georg Muffat and Johann Kuhnau (1660-1722), agree on the fastness of the speed in the tempo.[63] However, theorist Julia Sutton states that the Menuet slowed down in its tempo and became a moderate dance during the

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59 Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 396.

60 Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*, 469.

61 Wendy Hilton, *Dance of Court & Theater: The French Noble Style, 1690-1725* (Trenton, NJ: Princeton Book, 1981), 266.

62 Brossard, "Minuetto," in *Dictionaire de musique*.

63 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 69.

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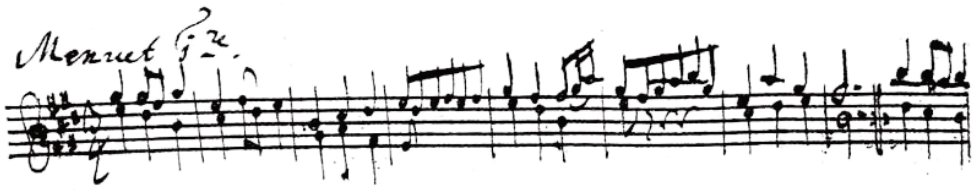
18th century.[64] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) also disagrees with Brossard's statement and questions his claim about the Menuet being "very fast." On the contrary, Rousseau claims that the tempo should be moderate rather than quick so that the music could convey a noble and elegant simplicity.[65]

According to Kirnberger, Menuet is the most natural dance in terms of its tempo and rhythm. All degrees of its tempo should fall between adagio and allegro, depending on the rate of speed. Menuet is "gentle and noble, particularly when containing mostly quarter notes."[66] Whereas Mattheson states that the Menuet is "moderate gaiety,"[67] Quantz contends that the Menuet should be played springily—the crochet (quarter note) is rather heavy with a short bow-stroke.[68] Nonetheless, the metronomic marking that Quantz gives is too fast for playing Bach's music considering its French style, including ornamentations, voice leading, and phrasing, as shown in Example 1. The suggestion is that the tempo is a dotted minim (dotted half note) equal 42-46 bpm.[69]

Example 1. Bach, Violin Partita No. 3, BWV 1006, Menuet I, beginning.



64 Julia Sutton, "The Minuet: An Elegant Phoenix," *Dance Chronicle* 8, no. 3-4 (1984): 140, https://doi.org/10.1080/01472528408568908.

65 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Menuet," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris, 1765), 10:346, trans. Pamela Gay-White as "Minuet," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2004), accessed December 30, 2020, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.256.

66 Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 400.

67 Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 224.

68 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 291.

69 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 69.

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With the rich texture and virtuosity embedded in Bach's Menuet, it is more reasonable that it be played in the moderate tempo on the suggested speed of 42-46 dotted minims per minute. Musicians should interpret the melody with gentle and noble styles in order to demonstrate the virtuosic technique elegantly.

(5) Gigue and Giga

Gigue originated in Britain during the 15th century and then was endowed French and Italian styles in the 17th century. The name of the dance may denote the French gigue, the Italian giga, or a combination of both styles. After the 18th century, gigues and gigas appeared as virtuosic instrumental solo music generating jolly effects.[70]

Bach's gigues can be divided into three types, French gigue, giga I, and giga II, based on the different rhythmic metric structure (Example 2). French gigue is usually performed on a fast tempo and is dominated by numerous dotted rhythms. Giga I demonstrates the slowest tempo among the three gigue types. It usually contains fast and equal notes, which gives people the false impression of it operating on fast tempo. Giga II is constructed on a metric structure which is closer to the French gigue, except that the rhythm structure of giga II is usually dominated by even eighth notes. Giga II is considered the most challenging and complex type of gigue by Bach because it contains diverse variations in rhythms and in combinations among the three gigue types.[71]

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[70] Meredith Ellis Little, "Gigue (i)," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed December 30, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.11123.

[71] Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 143-145.

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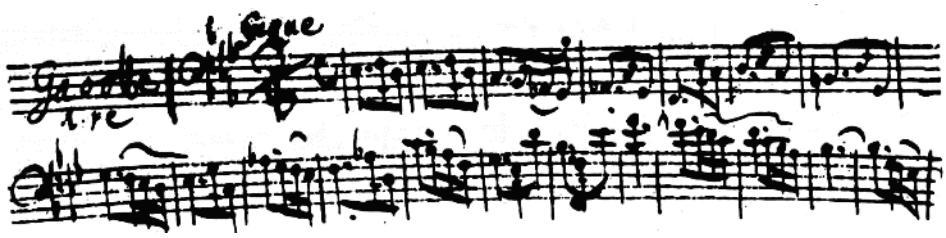
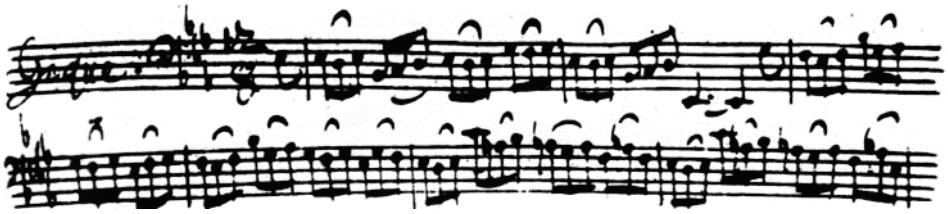
Example 2. Three types of gigues by Bach.

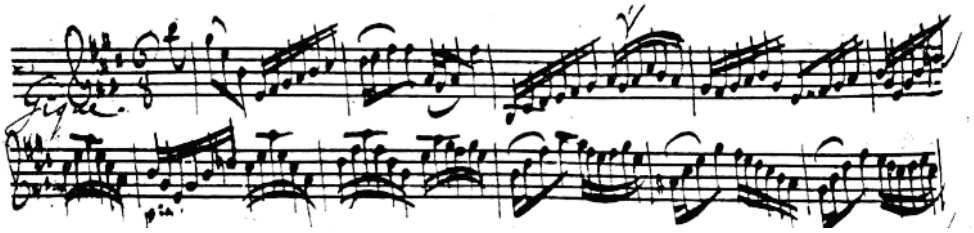
(a) French gigue. Bach, Cello Suite No. 5, BWV 1011, Gigue, beginning.



(b) Giga I. Bach, Cello Suite No. 4, BWV 1010, Gigue, beginning.



(c) Giga II. Bach, Violin Partita No. 3, BWV 1006, Gigue, beginning.



The tempi for each of the three types differ. Figure 1 shows that the French gigue is the fastest, and it is followed by giga II, and giga I, which is the slowest. Among these three types, only French gigue contains choreography that can still be retrieved in historic records. Italian giga has no choreography, and it is mainly written for instruments, especially violins. Unlike French gigue, for which substantial analyses and research have been done by the 18th century theorists and musicians, not much has been written about the tempo of giga, except two occasional remarks. Mattheson mentions that the tempo of giga should be of

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"extreme speed"[72] and Rameau writes in his *Pièces de clavecin avec une méthode* "Gigue en Roudeau" to remind players of the tempo.[73]

In Bach's solo violin works, there is one "giga" with 12/8 meter in Partita No. 2 (BWV 1004) and one "gigue" with 6/8 meter in Partita No. 3 (BWV 1006). Even though the composer used alternative names for his solo violin works, "gigue" in French and "giga" in Italian, both of them belong to the third type of giga II based on its metric structure.[74] It is worthy to point out that Bach's "gigue" compositions are Italian giga, even though the French name of the genre is used. Little and Jenne explain Bach's use of alternative names,

> …titled Giga II pieces are uncommon in Bach's era except in the works of Bach himself…we conclude that Bach was innovative in this area, and that he extended the giga idea of his contemporaries by using new and different musical ideas in pieces entitled gigue or giga.[75]

The time signatures of giga II usually include 3/8, 6/8 and 12/8 with jigging rhythms. As with the original character of gigue from the 15th century, giga II is lively, joyful, and with some ornamentation. Giga II retains all the characteristics, including the dance-like effect, although it is not dance type.[76]

To render Bach's giga with authenticity, it is particularly important to consider the time signature. Kirnberger does not specifically refer to the tempo of giga, but describes the relationships between meters in this way: "All gigues in 6/8 could also be written in 2/4; 12/8 would be a C meter."[77] He also thinks that the denominator number in the meter indicates the tempo so that the smaller number means a slower tempo and vice versa.[78] Although they do not have the

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72 Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 228.

73 Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Pièces de clavecin avec une méthode* (Paris: Chez Charles-Etienne Hochereau, [1724?]), 4-5.

74 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 260-261; Little, "Gigue (i)"; Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 79.

75 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 276.

76 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 275-276.

77 Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 396.

78 Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 396.

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tempo descriptions for Italian giga, other theorists of the 18th century mention the characters of meters: 6/8 represents gay and lively feeling, while 12/8 is very gay, brisk, and swift.[79] Consequently, musicians performing Bach's giga and gigue are to convey a lively and joyful styles with dance-like effect.

(6) Bourée and Tempo di Borea (Tempo di Bourée)

Bourée, a French dance popular in both the court and among the general folks, prevailed from the middle of 17th century until the middle of 18th century. The origin of Bourée is uncertain. Based upon some of the main characteristics of the dance, some historians believe that the dance originated in France while others suggest that the formation of Bourée have been heavily influenced by Italian and Spanish styles.[80]

Contemporary theorists from the 18th century usually depicted Bourée as gay,[81] content, pleasant, and easy going.[82] For example, Quantz reminds string players that Bourée should be played with "a short and light bow-stroke."[83] The time signature of Bourée in Bach's solo violin compositions includes both "2" and "₵," also called *alla breve*. Both Kirnberger and Quantz suggest that those two meters carry the same tempo and meaning with the former emphasizing that this meter is "somewhat more moderate."[84] In comparing the speeds of these two time signatures, Kirnberger, Quantz as well as others in the 18th century, think that *alla breve* is twice as fast as C. However, some French theorists have different opinions about 2 and ₵. Michel Pignolet de Montéclair proposes that 2

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79 Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 59-60.

80 Meredith Ellis Little, "Bourrée," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed March 13, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.03732.

81 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 291.

82 Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 225-226.

83 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 291.

84 Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 386

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is slightly faster than 𝔠, along the same line of thinking as Jacques-Martin Hotteterre (1674-1763) and Étienne Loulié.[85]

The Bourée tempo is generally agreed to be relatively fast among all French dances by 18th century theorists such as Johann Mattheson, Daniel Gottlob Türk,[86] and James Talbot (1664-1708).[87] Little and Jenne observe that some performers played the Bourée extremely fast, which would deprive the articulation of beats and pulses.[88] For the performance of Bach's Bourée, the suggested tempo is "minim = 80-88" for solo violin when specific techniques such as broken-chord, two and three-part texture, and harmonic structure are to be taken into consideration.[89] Besides the metronome suggestion, musicians should present an atmosphere of jocundity and lightness, with which performers can more faithfully express the perspectives of theorists and musicians in the 18th century.

(7) Ciaccona

Ciaccona (It., also *ciacona*; Fr. *chaconne*, *chacony*; Sp. *chacona*) first appeared in Spain at the end of the 16th century and later in Italy and France in the first half of the 17th century. Its original form is folk dance with triple meters accompanied by Spanish guitar. Although Bach named the piece using the Italian term, his Ciaccona combines the Italian and French styles with the former expressed in the fast and virtuoso passages and the latter in chordal sections with Sarabande rhythm.[90] Moreover, his Ciaccona for solo violin also shows German

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85 Mary Cyr, *Style and Performance for Bowed String Instruments in French Baroque Music* (London: Routledge, 2012), 88.

86 Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, 392.

87 Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, 328.

88 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 37.

89 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 45.

90 Silbiger, "Bach and the Chaconne," 375-381; Alexander Silbiger, "Chaconne," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed February 20, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.05354; Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 199-200.

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grandeur which features "large-scale architecture, including successive waves of groups of increasingly brilliant variations."[91]

Most theorists agree that the tempo of Chaconne is lighter and faster than Passacaglia.[92] Quantz writes: "A Chaconne is also (like the Sarabande) performed with majesty;"[93] Türk points out that the tempo of Chaconne is moderately fast and every first note on each measure should be rather strongly weighted.[94] Contrarily, Rousseau suggests that Chaconne should be played with moderate tempo.[95]

The hybrid Chaconne reached its peak by Bach's solo violin Ciaccona in terms of its virtuosic technique, musicality, and structure. It also became the prototype for Chaconne in the 19th century.[96] To accommodate Bach's Ciaccona while preserving the character of Chaconne, the ideal tempo should not be as fast as the Italian and French Chaconne tradition due to its complexity.[97] Quantz concedes to the fact that, "I do not pretend that a whole piece should be measured off in accordance with the pulse beat; this would be absurd and impossible."[98] Thus, the tempo can be decided by following these guidelines: first, choose the fastest notes with tempo words as a guide,[99] secondly, play on the moderate tempo as suggested; thirdly, based upon the tempo selected, the attention should

91 Silbiger, "Bach and the Chaconne," 371.

92 Theorists in the 20th century such as Schwandt and O'Donnell, Silbiger, Little and Jenne, and Neumann state the same tempo interpretation of Chaconne. See: Erich Schwandt and John O'Donnell, "The Principles of L'Affilard," *Early Music* 8, no. 1 (January 1980): 81; Silbiger, "Chaconne"; Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 200; Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 79.

93 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 290.

94 Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, 394.

95 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 80.

96 Silbiger, "Bach and the Chaconne," 358-359; Silbiger, "Chaconne"; Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 199.

97 Boyden, *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761*, 349; Cyr, *Style and Performance for Bowed String Instruments in French Baroque Music*, 87.

98 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 284.

99 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 50-51.

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be given to accomplishing comprehensive virtuosic technique in a Sarabande-like tone to showcase Bach's Italian and French styles.

(8) Loure

The origin of Loure is unknown.[100] The word "Loure" can be traced back to one type of bagpipe in Normandy during the 16th and 17th centuries, but no evidence shows that it was related to any dance or music. A century later, Loure became a popular French dance and instrumental air. Documents show that when Loure was presented to French King Louis IV by Louis Pécour (1653-1729), the king was "extremely pleased," and his patronage immediately made Loure a favourite at balls among the royals and the fine societies.[101]

The structure of the musical phrase of Loure is unbalanced, with the length set at five or seven measures, rather than four or eight measures.[102] Equally important to note, Loure shares similar characteristics with French Gigue in rhythm—they both have upbeat and *sautillant* rhythms[103] (Example 3). In French dance tradition, Loure conveys a pastoral tone with noble but languid characters.[104] French theorists and musicians such as Mattheson[105] and Masson refer to Loure as a slow gigue.[106] Brossard and Talbot recommend that because the tempo of Loure is slow, so the first beat of each bar should be played perceptibly.[107] Quantz disagrees on that point and contends that Loure should have the same tempo as Sarabande and Courante,[108] which is relatively fast.

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100 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 185.

101 Meredith Ellis Little, "Loure," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed September 9, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.17043.

102 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 187.

103 *Sautillant* rhythm: ♩. ♪♩

104 Little, "Loure."

105 Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 80.

106 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 186.

107 Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, 332.

108 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 290.

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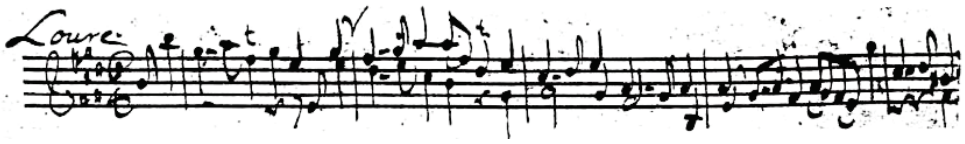
Example 3. Bach, Violin Partita No. 3, BWV 1006, Loure, beginning.



With consideration to meter, Kirnberger argues that that 6/4 should be performed lightly, and the pulse should be considered two beats in one bar instead of six beats.[109] Mattheson underscores the fact that 6/4 shows that it is a serious piece, in particular slow gigue, which is Loure.[110] To conclude, musicians should pay attention to Loure's *sautillant* rhythms with perceptible first beat on each bar, and its tempo should be interpreted as slow with pastoral, noble, and gentle characters.

(9) Gavotte en Rondeau

Gavotte was a court-favored dance and music from the 16th to the 18th centuries which reached its peak of popularity in the 1720s and 1730s. Instrumental Gavottes appear in two types—Italian and French styles. By comparison, French Gavotte is set to slower tempo with the use of *notes inégales*,[111] while Italian Gavotte is played at a faster tempo with virtuosic technique and mainly written for violins. Among Bach's solo violin works, the Gavotte en Rondeau is the longest movement and appropriates the French Gavotte style in the Rondeau form.[112]

During Bach's time, Gavotte was at the high point of "pastoral" style, which characterized Gavotte as a dance with a calm and expected rhythm. The depiction

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109 Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 386-387.

110 Houle, *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*, 59.

111 *Notes inégales* is a French musical term, which means unequal notes. It is used in the French instrumental music or the music with French style in the Baroque period.

112 Meredith Ellis Little and Matthew Werley, "Gavotte," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, published online 2001, accessed December 20, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.10774.

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of the music is quite varied, which ranges from light,[113] joyful,[114] and brisk,[115] to drinking song-like.[116]

The tempo of Gavotte is generally conceived as moderato. Whereas Quantz describes Gavotte as moderato tempo and slower than Bourrée and Rigaudon,[117] Muffat suggests that Gavotte is not as fast as Bourrée.[118] Without designating a specific speed, Rousseau claims that Gavotte could be fast or slow, but never to the extremes.[119] In contrast, Talbot believes Gavotte is a quick and fast dance, similar to Bourrée.[120]

Although there is no consensus regarding the tempo of Gavotte, we can approach Bach's ideal by re-contextualizing the dance back in Bach's time when it was popular in the royal courts. Gavotte's popularity as a favored dance in the court requires that it be performed with the quality of graceful delight reserved for the royalty, but at the same time attending to its pastoral character by keeping with the moderato tempo.

5. Conclusion

The questions about tempo surrounding Baroque music are constantly discussed today based on the different perspectives of particular music eras and the complex structures of musical instruments. With the rise of historically informed performances during the 20th century, musicians can explore the tempo question from a new perspective and many among them are willing to experiment

113 Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, 328.
114 Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 225.
115 Brossard, *A Musical Dictionary*, 84.
116 Bénigne de Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter* (Paris, 1668), ed. and trans. Austin B. Caswell as *A Commentary upon the Art of Proper Singing* (New York: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1968), 41.
117 Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 291.
118 Muffat, *Georg Muffat on Performance Practice*, 17.
119 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 48.
120 Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, 331.

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different ways to interpret the works so that they can appropriately re-enact the spirit and style of the Baroque era. Critical reviews about tempi tend to be divided—they are either too fast for modern performance or too slow for historical performance. Considering the Baroque period as the juncture of transition from the mensural system to the modern metrical system, we may be more capable to approach the meaning of meter, which indicates the tempo preferred by composers. To work out the tempo issue, it is crucial for musicians to consider meter for tempo interpretation.

Dance music, as Kirnberger states, is a good guideline for the ambiguous tempo markings of the 18th century music. With the rapid development of solo instrumental music in the 18th century, dance music composed for instruments demands more virtuoso playing techniques, and, more often than not, it becomes an avenue for musicians to display the mastery and artistry of the performers. In Bach's unaccompanied solo violin works, his dance music represents the prototypes even for today's performers, and his Ciacconna is so highly regarded that it is nicknamed, "Mt. Everest of violin playing."[121]

From the musical treatises and scholarly literature, we can see that musician theorists rarely have definitive answers for the tempo for a certain piece of work. Most of the discussions about tempo focus on the characteristics and styles of dance music. "A range of tempo is possible," claim Little and Jenne, who also suggested that tempo depends on various levels of backgrounds.[122] Kirnberger argues that, "this tempo must be correctly captured by the composer to conform with the type of sentiment he has to express."[123] Besides the tempo, only a good master who plays music with the outstanding characteristics of the piece can interpret musical pieces authentically.[124] Thus, good musicians are expected not only to have command over the technical challenges but also perception over the

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121 Raymond Erickson, "Secret Codes, Dance, and Bach's Great Ciaccona," *Early Music America* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 40.

122 Little and Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, 17.

123 Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 376.

124 Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, 216.

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authentic spirit of the pieces they perform. How can instrumental dance music be played with stylish tempo? This is a question confronting every musician. Performers should be able to bring out the character and style of dance music as well as the spirit and meaning of meter which can only be achieved with solid understanding of the historical backgrounds of the composers' cultural and artistic milieu. In this way, the tempo would be properly interpreted and performed. As Geminiani claims: good taste accomplishes true melody, the intention of the composers, and powerful effects.[125]

[125] Francesco Geminiani, *The Art of Playing on the Violin* (London, 1751), vi.

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